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Translocality: Place, Space – and Scale?

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ABSTRACT

Although used in various scientific disciplines as well as beyond science, or because of that, being specific about scale appears challenging; apart from referring to it as a social and political construct. It is a hypothesis projected on the world rather than an accurate depiction of a global world order or even the earth's surface. Instead of posing the question 'what is scale', the question should rather read 'what does it serve as' or 'what does it enable (researchers) to explore'. From a migration point of view, the relevance of territorial scales in particular has been stressed, especially with scientists putting a stronger emphasis on transnationalism. As there are more dimensions to scale than its territorial reading and increasing attention has been drawn to translocality as a more encompassing concept of mobility than transnationalism, clarification on the meaning of scale for translocality as an analytical concept as well as a tangible phenomenon in 'real life', is needed. Hence, the following reflections will link the concept of translocality with the current debate on scales and analyze conceptual interrelations. This will provide one option of how to conceive of scale in the context of translocality.

KEYWORDS: Translocality; Translocal space; Scale; Scalar thinking; Spatiality

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1.   Intro

Scale can be referred to as one concept of spatiality; it enables structuring space, but of course according to socially produced categories reflecting power asymmetries and resulting in a division of the world into bounded socio-spatial layers and areas. These are imagined to be embedded in a nested hierarchy suggesting a certain order, simply because scale as a notion is associated with a gradual system of tiers differing in size, range, extent, scope, power. Therefore scale is for instance vaguely equated with the extent or size of territories. In what is referred to as "geographical scale", levels of granularity in viewing phenomena in the social or physical nature are meant to be indicated. Scale is at the same time interchangeably used with level of decision making and scope of (institutional, administrative) power. Not least because of the concept's abstractness, its utilities and meanings have been questioned. 'Flat ontology' offers one counter perspective specifically contesting the hierarchical world order scalar thinking might suggest – although hierarchy and verticality and scale should not necessarily be used interchangeably. Flat ontology questions the scaffolding of places and spaces and instead of using scale, emphasizes the site as structuring element where the temporary emergence of order is grounded.

In the following it will be discussed in what sense scale can be applied within a concept of translocality and what implications different approaches to scale have for framing translocality, whether embeddedness for instance implies hierarchical, vertical, nested structures. One value a systemization beyond hierarchical scales adds, lies at least in putting under scrutiny which spatiality (scale, network, flat ontology, mobilities, assemblages) to take as a basis when conceptualizing the translocal social field. After briefly introducing to the connection of scale and translocales, an overview on different approaches to scales will be given. In that regard scale will be discussed as one spatiality among others, namely networks and 'flat ontology'. These concepts' interaction and respective utilities for understanding space will be outlined in order to subsequently decipher a useful approach to scale from a translocality viewpoint. This will then enable us to draw conclusions on how to possibly structure translocal spaces by interlinking them with understandings of scale and space that are referred to here, or without doing so, respectively.

1.1   Structuring the translocale and mobile lives: a matter of scale?

Translocality takes an agency-oriented perspective, i.e. it puts emphasis on multiple places which actors are embedded in at the same time by virtue of producing links between those places. Thereby they reshape them, transcend – socially constructed – boundaries of places and thus produce a translocal space (Brickell and Datta 2011; Freitag and Oppen 2010; Hall and Datta 2010; Steinbrink 2009). So, space clearly is an essential concept of translocality.

And, albeit being porous, boundaries are still relevant when conceptualizing places as well as people's interaction and agency constituting and thus structuring translocales. In what sense though are space and scale accommodated within research on translocality? Do scales even exist in a translocal social field? And why does space seem to automatically appear when reflecting on translocality and scale?

1.2   Are scale and space inseparably linked?

The overly frequent use of space and scale mostly in a rather broad sense puts them in a status of constant re-adjustment to an extent that they are hardly amenable with only a single concept or from one single perspective. Several times researchers therefore called for an approach including multiple conceptions of space and power in order to frame the notion of scale in a comprehensible and useful manner (Jones 2009; McFarlane 2009; Leitner et al. 2008; Harvey 1969).

These two notions, scale and space, are not easily separable and not forcibly to be separated since theorizing space and its dynamics in the context of globalization, has become one purpose of scale (Sheppard 2002: 313). Hence, scale is used to differentiate and thereby structure space (no matter if social or physical space), or as Brenner points out, scalar structurations are one form of sociospatial structuration (2001: 603). Both space and scale, more specifically socio-spatial scales, are understood as socially produced arrangements enabling people to make sense of social realities. In the context of her suggestion to redefine "spatial scales (i.e. space) as a set of categorical distinctions", Amelina even equates both terms (2012: 275). Taking a stance on scales that frames them as one type of socially constructed boundaries distinguishing spatial or territorial levels, and considering space as a set of categorical distinctions – among which scale is one (ibid. pp. 284) –marks an interface of scale and space which renders their separation for analytical purposes impossible.

On the other hand, it is argued that without a clear distinction between scale as a category of analysis and scale as a category of practice, the former will be confused with an ontological entity although it is a social category only and as such covers an epistemological purpose. That ontological sense, however, is sneaked into the practice of space-making as a theoretical tool. Solely this act ultimately engenders the alleged inextricability of scale and space (Moore 2008: 207). So only if scale is considered a pre-given context, it becomes inseparable from spatial processes.

While this point will be picked up later on, at first more clarification on the different meanings of scale against the backdrop of translocal space is needed.

1.3   Connecting scale and translocal space

In complementation to transnationalism, translocality, indeed, does not explicitly emphasize nation state boundaries (which imply certain institutional rules and regulations and thus matter with regard to international migration involving national border crossings), but moves beyond state boundary-based conceptualizations. Nonetheless, as the 'translocale' extends the context of action, dealing with boundaries with whatever signification – those of an actor's everyday experience or of administrative authority for instance – does play a role and has an impact when it comes to mobility. Such boundaries, however, do comprise a notion of scale – as level. Moreover, the site, or specific places (as opposed to the image of mere fluidity and blurring) are – from a translocal viewpoint – significant configurations to draw attention to, as for instance Gielies puts it, "migrant places are meeting places of social networks, and on the other hand they are sites (translocalities) where transmigrants can reach out to people in other places" (2009: 280).

> Does translocality thus imply the dissolution of scale(s) or a strengthening of their significance …

Movements of people across the 'real' world are usually seen as being based on a – albeit socially constructed – certain order, suggesting power relations, power imbalances and therefore hierarchies (Portes et al. 1999; Van Hear et al. 2012; or Osbahr et al. 2008: 1960/62, the latter arguing from a resilience perspective). These hierarchies are obviously reproduced by such an imagination. Understanding the world as a horizontally structured network instead might therefore appear as an appropriate substitution of such a hierarchical understanding. Or, as networks involve hierarchies between nodes as well, or can even be imagined as scale-transcendent, flat ontology might prove to be a more fruitful approach to translocal space and translocal lives.

Looking at space as a re-shapeable formation that is constituted by human interaction and resulting linkages of places with each other, calls for taking into focus both practices and processes which are more granular in nature and outcome and those relating to a coarse level. Instead of forcibly persisting in ideas referring to scale as levels of administrative authority, a translocality perspective enables a structural distinction between sites, locales and translocales. Multi-sitedness and -scalarity as integral elements of translocal geographies are hardly subsumable within a hierarchy of national and global. Which is also why for instance Brickell and Datta repudiate such a framing (2011: 17).

… or a focus shifted from scale to practices?

However, conceiving of a translocal social field as scaleless, i.e. any sort of gradation is inexistent, does not serve the purpose of framing translocality in a suitable manner. Hence, sustaining the differentiation of scopes and effects different spatial entities have, which is the basic idea that characterizes a 'scalar' thinking, does make sense also for understanding translocality, in as far as differences in power, among other things, still exist, because hierarchy does not disappear only because people are more mobile. Ordering translocal fields through actors' practices might prove more suitable though, because they constitute a translocal field. And, as Mansfield (2005) states, practices have "scalar dimensions" or as Moore (2008) points out on a similar note, scale can even be treated as a category of practice.

Actors and their practices are embedded at multiple sites (and locales) within one trans-locale at the same time. The concerned localities hence 'share' the same level of relevance and influence on place making itself, i.e. on structuring the (translocal) field. A gradation between site, locale, translocale (between granular and more coarse or encompassing) is nonetheless applicable. Scale is one tool to structure space – indeed, not the only pertinent one for translocal social fields – as actors' practices, connections and temporally parallel multi-embeddedness mark an essential device for structuring – translocal – space, too.

2.   Approaches to scale

As outlined above, the current debate on the utility of scale as a conceptual approach to structuring space[1] does obviously touch crucial elements the translocality concept is composed of. Connecting the dots between translocality and scale implies answering questions on the specific framing of spatiality a theoretical concept of translocal space necessitates, i.e. whether translocality is compatible with scalar thinking or if a network conception of space would be the corollary of viewing space as being constituted by translocal social practices? In order to address such questions differences in spatialities will be dissected in what follows, as well as a brief outline on the bearing epistemology and ontology have in the ongoing debate on scales.

2.1   Spatialities – ordering principles of social space

In juxtaposing different spatial concepts, each one's added value to grasping social space

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1   Smith 1993; Swyngedouw 1997; Amin 2002; Schatzki 2002; Sheppard 2002; Thrift 2004; Marston et al. 2005; Collinge 2006; DeLanda 2006; Hoefle 2006; Escobar 2007; Leitner and Miller 2007; MacLeod and Jones 2007; Leitner et al. 2008; Jessop et al. 2008; Moore 2008; Jones 2009; McFarlane 2009; Fraser 2010; Woodward et al. 2010; Herod 2011

can be identified. Different spatialities are not necessarily mutually exclusive though. In what follows, selected spatialities will briefly be outlined in order to explore each one's interface with the concept of translocality and their bearings on conceiving of translocal space.

Scale as one spatiality

The ways in which spatialities can be framed, vary as much as perspectives on scale do. Just as space can be considered socially produced, scale at times is referred to as an invisible but powerful construct that is both shaped and transformed by social practices and struggles (Paasi 2004: 542) due to power asymmetries between different scales (Leitner and Miller 2007: 117) and one that differentiates space (Marston and Smith 2001: 615). Such different spatial levels, mostly referred to as geographic scales, usually run from the local, or from the body to the global, encompassing – as, among others, Herod suggests (2011) – the urban, the regional and the national scale, too. Herod for instance, certifying scale a key function in geographic theory where it is used in the sense of size (which refers to the horizontal measure of scale) as well as in the sense of level (referring to a vertical unit), also distinguishes various conceptions of geographic scales: "envelopes of space", "networked scales, "material social products", a fiction or imaginary and a means to divide the Earth's surface (ibid. 250). Relation might be added to size and level, as a third dimension of scale (Sayre 2009). In addition to that, the concept of scale enables a differentiation of administrative and institutional levels. Here scale is referred to as (administrative) level, including for instance a state's regulatory power (Leitner and Miller 2007: 119; Brenner 2009: 126; Taylor 2011). That certainly implies a scalar hierarchy of nested spaces or territories separated from each other by boundaries, engendering a notion of a hierarchical order of scales or a scaffold of power (relations) which norms, rules and regulations are embedded in. Against the backdrop of the production of space and power being inextricably intertwined with each other (Lefebvre 1991) studying practices and power relations appears more productive in order to understand the spatialities of social life, such as space, mobility, networks, place, connectivity or scale, which Leitner and Miller juxtapose with an abstract ontological approach (2007: 119, 122; Leitner et al. 2008).

Taking a different perspective, however, might shift such an understanding. From a governance point of view for instance, territory and scalar spatialities are not forcibly bound together or attached to each other, as, among others, Bulkeley argues (2005: 887). Leitner and Miller, moreover, reject the idea of a predetermined hierarchy. Although constraints to local levels might occur owing to disparate paces of processes, that is slower moving ones on larger scales, this does not automatically imply a domination of lower levels by larger ones (2007: 117). They also suggest an understanding of scale as only one spatiality among others, namely networks, space, place, region, mobility which in combination co-influence the constitution of social life (ibid.: 121). Taking those other spatialities into consideration seems hence useful when framing the connection between scale and translocality.

Network

Network concepts, offering another stance on spatial relations, emphasize connections between sites. Such a relational understanding of the world includes a view on the local and the global as mutually constitutive which renders a dichotomization of abstract space and concrete place fruitless as Massey concludes (2004). Space articulates within networks which in turn fosters connections and spaces' connectivity (Latour 1999; Thrift 2004). Law complements these relational notions by emphasizing the situatedness of the global (2004). In that sense sites are seen as constructing the global by producing links eventually spinning networks (ibid.). As a consequence ordering space along a nested hierarchy that moves 'down' from global to local seems as close to being terminated as reproducing territorial boundaries in order to structure space (Thrift 2004: 59; Smart and Lin 2007). The high degree to which objects, people and information are mobile today, does not only no longer allow, but rather undermines the conceptualization of the world as being constituted by "nested territorial formations" (Amin 2004: 33). Recognizing the constitution of spatial configurations and boundaries through network structures (topology) of increasingly dynamic actor networks whose spatial configuration vary, is therefore the approach network scholars consider as more adequately accounting for today's reality (Amin 2002, 2004; Amin and Thrift 2002).

Flat Ontology: Scaleless space?

Yet another stance on thinking and structuring space lies in the concept of 'flat ontology'. Its creation is understood as being done by singular individuals who do not differ in their ontological status, but only in their spatio-temporal scale (De Landa 2002). As, according to Marston et al. (2005), scalar thinking suggests a hierarchical world order[2] which does not mirror 'reality' or only along rigid and grafted lines, respectively, additionally resulting in a (re-)production of structures loaded with power imbalances, a flat ontology is meant to emphasize the significance of self-organizing sites and events related to each other which then results in a structure of space. Hence neither scale as size nor scale as level are necessary hypotheses (Marston et al. 2005; Woodward et al. 2010). This also implies that, according to a flat ontology, drawing on a 'site ontology' in that respect (Schatzki 2002), sites are constituted by practices (corresponding among others with Deleuze's conceptualization of self-organizing processes creating an autonomous reality which is why processes exist in an ontological sense (1994)). Sites can be described as 'locations in space where and through which [interaction between 'actants'] occurs' (ibid.). Sites are thus 'emergent properties' of

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2 which is debatable and objections were raised in that regard (Jonas 2006, as well as Leitner and Miller 2007) arguing vertical does not equal hierarchical order nor one single direction of influence, which is why an equation of scale with a hierarchical structure of spatial entities is illegitimate)

interactions conducted by those 'material bodies' 'inhabiting a site' who thereby constantly re-create this site which leads to the difference of each site as one of its constituting parts (Marston et al. 2005; Woodward et al. 2010). The conceptual element of such self-organizing sites which are not steered by processes that operate at scales above them (ibid.) – because human beings do not stand outside of sites, but their agency is only one component of sites besides materialities (Woodward et al. 2010: 273) – adds another nuance to the net-work perspective viewing sites as constructing the global by producing links that eventu-ally spin networks (Law 2004).

A flat ontology also stands in opposition to hierarchical ontologies. The former is made of unique, singular individuals who have their ontological status in common, but differ in their scales of operation which equals the spatio-temporal scale (DeLanda 2006). So, while a notion of scale is still used in that conceptualization, in a sense which renders scale sim-ilar to scope and assigns a spatial dimension to scales of operation, the use of scale in any sense is considered unnecessary for a flat ontology as Marston et al. (2005) define it; the reason being the confusion of scale with spatial size on the one hand and with institutional or boundary levels (national, regional etc.) on the other hand, both constructing difference. Since scale appears in network concepts in that latter sense this is how a network perspec-tive and flat ontology differ in conceptualizing space. As difference is an integral element of site, there is no need for the production of difference by means of 'scale'. Flat ontology nei-ther includes hierarchies nor boundlessness in its theoretical understanding of space but offers one which considers event-relations and event-spaces, produced by such relations, as providing structure. Due to these event-relations being localized or non-localized and running through sites, these very sites can be mobile and are furthermore emergent, that is they turn into the 'situation' where the social unfolds (ibid.; Woodward et al. 2010: pp. 272). The site provides and marks itself the material context for bodies and practices composing the site. Material bodies in turn produce fields that bind themselves together. Therefore composition and production of and in sites are not separable, but as a matter of fact, a site's dynamic composition and its product are the same (ibid.).

Flat ontology merely as a term, does point to the necessity to clearly distinguish between ontology and epistemology against the backdrop of a concept of scales for the purpose of clarifying the latter's meanings and utility.

Scale – object of analysis or an analytical tool?

Taking a geographical perspective in general, scale serves both as an object of analysis – how do social relations produce scale – and as a narrative aid that is employed in order to talk about existing structures, hierarchies, relations, networks (McFarlane 2009: 564; Sayre 2009).

A scale concept allows to contextualizing what is being observed and analyzed at one site and in one instance (Hoefle 2006). One single phenomenon can be disassembled into various, perhaps even unrelated phenomena, merely by taking the variance of scales into consideration. Consequently, one phenomenon has different implications (Manson 2008: 779). Therefore, as a device for analytical and structuring purposes, scale does not physically exist in reality. And yet, although being socially constructed, it does have 'real', materialize-able implications. Scales do thus not exist in an ontological sense but only in an epistemological one – which have inspired researchers, including geographers, to deconstruct the imaginary of space as nested hierarchy (Latour 1999; Amin 2002, 2004; Amin and Thrift, 2002; Thrift 2004; Law 2004) or to call for a 'flat ontology', respectively (Woodward et al. 2010; Woodward et al. 2008; Jones et al. 2007; Marston et al. 2005 drawing on De Landa who opposes hierarchical ontologies to flat ontologies (2004) and Schatzki propagating a 'site ontology' (2002)).

Clarifications on meanings and utility of scale

Viewing space through a flat-ontology lens excludes the world's conceptualization as a totality of sites, situations and single processes because this predefines actual events and situations in their analysis without doing justice to the importance of singularities (Woodward et al. 2010). In sharp contrast to such radical particularism stands for instance (social) constructivism emphasizing the social production of structures, inequalities, imbalances which take place at different (social and spatial) scales. From such a point of view it is not merely sites but (inter)actions, agency and structure that interdependently produce and reproduce abstract and concrete structures (and materialities) and sites do not shape events independently, but single effects add up to broader dynamics, that is cumulative effects which cannot just be ignored nor conceived of as being bound to only one site (even though this might be where impacts of such cumulative effects materialize). Scales might thus not be visible or palpable or observable as such, but their impacts are.

Consequentially, the (preliminary) conclusion could be drawn that albeit scale might be suitable to serve as a social category and an epistemological unit, as an ontological one it does not (Moore 2008). Nevertheless, as for instance relational thinking (and more precisely, topological thinking stemming from ANT (Latour 2005; Law 2002)) of spatial formations allows for an understanding of processes and structures as simultaneously local, global and national (as Smart and Lin argue (2007: 283)), does this refer to the nature, the very character, of structures and practices (their 'being') or rather their implications and generation?

Evidently, approaches to spatiality range between conceiving of scale as a mere social product with implications in the material world (materialist approach: there is a material reality to scales even though they are socially produced; Smith 1993; Swyngedouw 1997) and a reification of scale and its usage as category of analysis (idealist). In that context, Manson for

instance suggests an "epistemological continuum" running from realism (there is one single shared reality which the objective observer is able to perceive and access) to constructivism (reality may exist, knowledge about it stems from social mediation and manipulation though). This continuum is embedded in an even wider spectrum of approaches spanning all nuances between logical positivism and relativism). Realist scales mark one pole within that range, constructionist scales the other one with different types of hierarchies as well as network scaling lying in between these poles (Manson 2008: 777).

A construct with 'real' implications?

Scale, however, becomes real in its consequences, i.e. scale is real in as far as the consequences of having such a construct are real. If scale as a category is used as a means to explain power imbalances, this determines to a certain extent how people act and interact in the material world (since "[…] how we have been trained to examine the world shapes how we see it." (Herod 2011: 257)), which – as such imbalances are thereby reproduced – poses a risk (as Herod points out, 2011: 251). Hierarchy and scalar thinking, despite their social construction and of course without being naturally given, do have implications in reality. Hence, they are undeniably existing in the 'real' world which is for instance mirrored in concrete – socially produced but materialized – boundaries such as the entire division of the world in nation states, national territories etc., being fixed on maps and having been institutionalized which ultimately and as a matter of fact, has very concrete and real consequences in everyday lives, and for mobility in particular. In that respect, a notion of power seems inextricably linked to a debate on spatial conceptions (Lefebvre 1991; Leitner and Miller 2007: 119; Brenner 2009: 126). One consequence of power being asymmetrical in its geometry (McLeod et al. 2007, 1186) its transfer and dynamics in and between spatial entities have to be taken into consideration when analyzing power. Therefore a scalar perspective does make sense in order to account for such boundary-crossing dynamics. So, even though a flat ontology does without boundaries or hierarchies – since the mere situation "marks the limit of ontology" (Woodward et al. 2010: 273) – in the urge for a deconstruction of both scale and network based on their assumption of transcendent actors and structures, also discloses an acknowledgement of their existence (ibid.: 274).

Assemblages as an approach to capturing spatial complexity

The apparent inexistence of one single master concept of space and scale certainly does not prevent actors from using such spatial imaginaries as scale and network as devices in order to structure and narrate configurations. Among others the concept of '(translocal) assemblages' might turn out to be useful when it comes to avoiding such universality-claiming concepts as offered by scale and network (McFarlane 2009: 564).

An assemblage, in general referred to as interrelated sets of practices and processes, is composed of single, heterogeneous elements playing a crucial and active role. As a multiplicity of these elements, an assemblage, however, exceeds its components which results in them being assembled to one encompassing entity, without these elements decomposing though (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Braun 2006; McFarlane 2009: pp. 561). The composition of assemblages manifests both an element of power as well as instability. While the latter originates from constantly changing relations and reshaping of socio-material practices, power is conceived of as mediating interrelated sets of processes and single elements assembled together. Thereby the concept of assemblages pays attention to spatiality and temporality. It moreover emphasizes emergence (instead of resultant structures), stemming from a perspective on power as plural and constantly transforming. As clearly discernable, these briefly sketched conceptual characteristics of assemblages qualify as interfaces with the concepts of space described before which again highlights the invalidity of one single concept of space claiming universality and the option to aptly circumvent the local-global scalar distinction, respectively. Enhancing the degree of precision, the term assemblage is specified to translocal assemblages. These are place-based while at the same time an exchange of knowledge, ideas, practices, materials and resources across sites occurs. Hence, in addition to a network perspective for instance, focusing on connections between sites, a translocal-assemblage notion emphasizes both connections between different spatialities and the production of links between them carried out by actors due to their simultaneous situatedness at multiple sites.

Such ventures to overcome an imaginary of rigid and clearly separable spatial entities are not limited to moving away from local-global dichotomies but also stretch to a conceptualization of spatial structures – in a political-economic sense – as a mosaic of superimposed and interpenetrating nodes and levels (Brenner 2001: 886). The recognition of a combinability and validity of multiple spatial concepts is thereby insinuated.

2.2   Combing different spatialities

A combination of different spatialities takes territories and boundaries, networks, mobility and connectivity as well as localities, places and sites into consideration (Jones 2009; McFarlane 2009; Jessop et al. 2008; Mac Leod and Jones 2007; Hannam et al. 2006; Bulkeley 2005; also Prigogine's and Stengers' 'theory of ensembles' (1984); as well as Collins' (2011) suggestion to use a relational-territorial approach for analyzing space). Not only because local-global dichotomies are broken open and mobility requires a conceptualization of space, scale, place and site that is in keeping with the time, a combination of network and scalar perspectives appear to make sense. The permanent transgression of boundaries weakens a clear-cut ordering partly included in a scalar approach. Today's communication facilities

enable and foster 'copresence' (of translocal actors) for instance. Scales have become part of relational thinking in as far as, instead of actors merely relating to them as ontologically pre-given entities, territorial or socio-spatial scales (national or regional for instance) can be conceived of as socially produced and related to each other as part of their very composition. They are thus implicated in social, economic and political practices, which in turn, as such practices involve contemporary mobility, connections and network structures, corresponds with a relational approach to conceptualizing territory (Amelina 2012; MacLeod and Jones 2007; Hannam et al. 2006; Brenner 2004, 2009; Smith 2001; Delaney and Leitner 1997).

But also from a theoretical standpoint, as networks and scales do have common ground in the way they are theoretically conceptualized and might at times be seen as complementing each other, a compromise of both spatial concepts does not seem impossible (as for instance Bulkeley (2005: 888) as well as Jessop et al. (2008) suggest). Both network perspectives and scalar thinking comprise of assumptions on relations (network topology; relational nature of scales; "relational scalar networks" (Swyngedouw 2004); "networked relations within and between scales" (Neumann 2009: 2)) which is also why units used to operationalize networks and scale are similar, that is reach or scope for networks and extent for scales (ibid.; Manson 2008: 778). Furthermore, the shift away from the paradigm of container space allows for recognizing the scalar dimension in networks. 'Thinking space relationally', as Jones puts it, contributes to an introduction of a topological theory of space, place and politics, instead of a structure-agency dichotomy (2008: 492). Such (relational) thinking has, however, limits; boundedness, power and time are not sufficiently addressed in relational thinking. Spatiality and relations are taken for granted, understood as something given. Contextual forces (class, race, gender, location) are for instance factors framing opportunities in social spaces which, despite relationality, constrain, structure, connect and limit space and places (Jones 2009, Paasi 2004). A polarization both of scale and network as well as network and flat ontology (as there are intersections as well) is therefore unnecessary. Similar to how relations between objects are viewed to figure space (Jones 2009: 491), relations, from a flat-ontology perspective, can only exist between events (Sklar 1977; Marston et al. 2005) which constitutes their enormous importance for structuring space; whereas the same then holds true for relations. As aforementioned, flat ontology emphasizes self-organization which refers to mobile and mutual sites being reified by a process of self-organization. Sites or situations are considered to be constituted as singularities, i.e. bodies, things, orders, events, doings and sayings are assembled through dynamic relations (Marston et al. 2005). Despite this particularistic notion, relations obviously do play a role as a constituent of space. Relations, as argued from an integration-oriented stance, should, however, not been taken for granted, but their emergence rather demands causal analysis, too (Jones 2009). It can hence be argued that neither relational understandings nor a 'flat ontology' exclude hierarchies or scale, but

stress the necessity to analyze who produces them and how (Latour 2005; Leitner and Miller 2007: 121; Leitner et al. 2008). One single master concept for spatiality does simply not seem to ultimately make sense.

2.3   Does a combination of spatial concepts result in confusion on scale?

In a framework focusing on territory, place, scale and network as crucial dimensions of socio-spatial relations, all of these structuring principles can be analyzed as one formation each, whereby a temporal dimension has to be included (Jessop et al. 2008; MacLeod and Jones 2007). This enables a conception of each dimension as both a structuring principle and a field which is structured by and interacts with other structuring principles. Such a combination of spatialities, as opposed to approaches that focus on a single one, proves more fruitful in as far as it does not deny a territorial dimension and boundedness of spatial configurations even though they are emerging and interrelated.

Even though an expansion of scale beyond a nested hierarchy of spatial entities is just as necessary as a distinction between inside and outside – bordering clearly being an essential aspect of scale (Smart and Lin 2007: pp. 283), a combination of all those different spatial concepts might result in confusion defeating analytical accuracy. Such a stance, however, does not concur with Marston et al.'s more radical suggestion of entirely abandoning scale. It rather argues against either scale becoming everything or everything, including networks, becoming scale (ibid.). This, on the other hand, does not exclude – but rather indicates the significance of – a distinction between different structuring dimensions of space or socio-spatial relations in order to comprehensively dissect their emergence.

In the remainder of this paper an approach to scale which corresponds with structuring space from a translocality perspective will be discussed.

In how far could for instance a "flat ontology" be of any use for translocality which is at times referred to as a 'field of everyday practices across scales' (Brickell and Datta 2011: 7, emphasis added)? Or can translocality be considered a mediating concept that helps integrating global and local scales and conceptualizing connections made between those scales and beyond the local, as Freitag and Oppen suggest (2010: 3); which would draw on an understanding of scales as separating different spaces and levels of spaces. Or, apart from that, which approach to space (socio-spatial structures and relations) corresponds with the notion of a translocal field enclosing not only multiple places and spaces but multiple scales, too (Brickell and Datta 2011)?

3.   Approaching scale from a translocal viewpoint

As aforementioned a translocal approach puts most emphasis on multi-situatedness and interconnectedness of actors taking their multi-sited and multi-scalar social practices as a basis (Brickell and Datta 2011: 7). A translocal perspective captures views 'within' and 'beyond' localities which become translocalities because people move across and beyond, settle in and link multiple localities with each other. Due to the "co-presence" of translocal actors (in different places and situations, embedded in different groups of actors at the same time), they make localities mutually appear within one another engendering connections between localities. The production of such links is based on human mobility and agency. A thereby established network of linkages bridges unconnected sites, spans distances and leads across and beyond boundaries (of whatever sort) since people move and interact across such boundaries of constructed spatial entities, including territories (nations, municipalities etc.).

Scale is applied in conceptualizations of translocality in the sense of a differentiation of socio-spatial figurations ranging from body, family, home, street and neighborhood to region, nation and – as most abstract level – to the transnational space, while also referring to rural and urban as well as 'scales of experience' (Brickell and Datta 2011: 19; Cresswell 2010; Steinbrink 2009; Smart and Lin 2007; Ley 2004)[3] . So, similarly to transnational approaches, translocality understands scales as an order of nested spatial levels running from body to transnational. Scale is moreover mostly described as being transcended, suggesting an interchangeable use with boundaries being likewise transcended and transgressed as a consequence of people's mobility. Usually addressing place, space and scale as a combined expression makes them appear as an inextricably related set of categories which constitute not only translocality as a conceptual approach but also a translocal social field itself. A more systematic differentiation of these terms might indeed contribute to fruitfully conceptualize translocales.

3.1   Structuring the translocal field

In order to conceptualize the translocal social field, differences in time and level are crucial, like in other socio-spatial configurations, too. As sketched above, the imagination of scale provides one corresponding structure. By means of constructing scaled spaces, that is a graduation of socio-spatial levels such as body, family, local, translocal, national and trans-

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3   Whereas from a transnational perspective scale is interchangeably used or at times purposefully combined, respectively, with level of society which social formations or institutions are conceptualized at, that is social transformation takes place at various levels, including local, regional, national, global, and transnational (Faist et al. 2010: pp. 7; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2010)

national, a variety of spaces is created between and across which connections are made and negotiations (from local to local) are carried out.

In translocal approaches, the frequent transgression of boundaries is referred to as "multi-/cross-scalar situatedness" or "situatedness across scales" (Brickell and Datta 2011: 11/17) while being located or anchored in a particular locality. This (locality) is where translocal actors negotiate social organization (i.e. interact) on an everyday basis, and is also referred to as site. Whereas 'flat ontology' views site as self-organizing, emergent and constituted by practices (that are not necessarily exclusively human-induced), site from a translocal stance is based on actors and actual human interaction. In further elaboration to a spatial concept, social relations as outcome of interaction or embodied locations spanning across different places, articulate as particular places (drawing on Massey 1997) and thereby produce space. Space and relations to other places in turn generate a translocal space. To space, in comparison to place, a scalar element is added as well as networks which alludes to a combination of diverse spatialities within a translocality framework.

3.2   Does translocality imply a combination of scalar and relational thinking?

In contrast to such an approach suggesting an interlocking of relational and scalar notions, arguments are made for a more distinct separation of relational (or contextual) and scalar understandings of localities in an era of globalization (Gielis 2009 drawing on Appadurai 1995; Escobar 2001; Marcus 1995). Since numerous "empirical scales" (Appadurai 1995) exist in one place, the latter becomes more various. Therefore an understanding of place as limited to a narrow horizon due to the rigidity of imagined scales and boundaries is obsolete. Instead, people by applying today's means of communication create translocalities from where they reach out to people at other places and networks, where people produce and maintain their web of linkages (Gielis 2009). Hence, places – induced by connections across places and spaces – have been transformed from localities into translocalities which are, in comparison to the stance outlined before, equated with sites (ibid.: 273). Despite the stronger focus on site within this perspective on translocality (essentially, a 'translocality-as-site' concept), it does not share to a significant degree assumptions 'flat ontology' is based on, as the latter puts a stronger emphasis on event-relations, rather than connections between sites.

Taking a slightly different perspective, and yet anchored in a translocality framework, a translocal field, and hence space, can also be conceived of as being produced by the means of practices. As these are reflected in space, it is for obvious reasons always the latter which marks the focal point when analyzing structures, including scales. Even though space and practice are not easily separable it might make sense to specifically make the latter the anal-

ysis' subject matter – which translocality does. Therefore not only scalar thinking and spatial structuring should be analytically combined, but an understanding of scale as a category of practice might be helpful (Moore 2008) or, as Mansfield suggests, the view on practices might be broadened by dissecting "scalar dimensions of practices" (2005; quoted in Osbahr et al. 2008: 1952). This of course also applies to 'translocal social practices' and their interrelation with scale, corresponding with Brickell's and Datta's suggestion to conceive of translocality as a 'field' of *everyday practices across scales* (2011: 7; emphasis added). Approaching scale from that angle suggests apart from an understanding of the latter as level of operation, one that considers practices being influential and impactful because they exceed and cross single socio-spatial contexts. Furthermore, that notion draws attention to practices' reach which increases by encompassing multiple contexts, places and situations in their range of impacts. This in turn plays a particular role against the background of translocality assuming 'multi-scalar effects' of translocal social practices (Brickell and Datta 2011). And whereas multi-scalarity in that latter conception implies different levels of space and time (ibid. 19), this is very much linked to practices and their interaction with different socio-spatial and temporal levels, i.e. their "scalar dimensions".

Taking into consideration – yet again – the permanent transgression of places' boundaries by interacting beyond and across them, translocal space as well as places can be conceived of as non-territory-bound, open, practice-based or produced by actor and negotiable (cf. Jones suggesting translocal spatial politics as non-territorial projects (2009: 493); Brenner 2004; Amelina 2012: 276). Similar to relational thinking, which conceptualizes space as the emergence of relations and links this emergence to non-static and open territories, translocality also includes anchorage in its understanding of the production of links and therefore the production of translocales. Social practices, by being situated in places and linking these to other places, eventually constitute the translocal field. This is therefore certainly not a 'container' enclosing all these places, links and practices. But practices are constituents which contribute to structuring the translocal field as an unfixed, changeable configuration. Hence, space making is based on both being connected and being embedded at the same time (as opposed to mere constant fluidity) (ibid.).

An understanding of scales as non-fixed or non-rigid, but undergoing a constant process of being redefined and their content, extent, importance and interrelations restructured (Swyngedouw 1997; Brenner 2004; Amelina 2012), thus turns out to be compatible with the permeability of places' boundaries caused by social actors' agency characterizing translocal spaces. These premises given, it is more evident that the embeddedness of actors and social settings – pointing at an intersection of translocality and scalar thinking – might indeed suggest a nested configuration, which is, however, not forcibly to be equated with verticality, leave alone any sort of hierarchy, as also the interchangeable use of the two latter notions

has its flaws (Leitner and Miller 2007). Stressing moreover the significance of concrete entities and places that links are built between (instead of nation states being connected with each other), alludes to what is usually referred to as 'changing scales' or 'zooming in', due to the fact that this implies a differentiation of levels. However, the mere distinction does not necessarily entail a hierarchical order (positioning the national level above the local) as in certain instances more specific places (such as a city or a neighborhood) loom larger than the more comprehensive space (global or tansnational for instance).

3.3 Does translocality benefit from a 'flat ontology'?

With respect to framing boundaries, translocality can be seen, indeed, as having common ground with a 'flat ontology'.

While in translocality approaches ties span spaces between localities (Smith 2001; Smart and Lin 2007: 287) and link different entities with each other (individual and network, individual and community for instance) to a translocale, along with the imagination of scales and hierarchies plaited in translocality concepts, boundaries are constructed which enclose specific (imagined) spaces of varying size or extent. Although this is meant to enable a distinction between various contexts of action and interaction (Brickell and Datta 2011: pp. 10), such an imagination of scalarity constructs boundaries. These, however, should in the case of translocales rather be treated as – in theory – losing importance in the face of translocal actors' boundary-transgressing practices, which also challenges the importance of scales for translocality.

So as a matter of fact, boundaries between different spatial or institutional formations (that are usually imagined to differ in level or 'scale') are by no means 'natural' but a hypothesis in order to simplify (social) reality. Nonetheless such boundaries and thus scalar thinking do influence conceptions of these realities and therefore these very realities themselves. And obviously, as scales – understood as levels of interaction – including their assumed boundaries do generate structure, and boundaries themselves are constructed, 'structures' hence seem negotiable and re-designable (Freitag and Oppen 2010; Hannam et al. 2006). In that sense a call for abandoning scale (Marston et al. 2005) appears more legitimate because this entails a deconstruction of boundaries which is – theoretically – helpful indeed.

As described before, interaction and practices are performed in concrete localities, even translocal practices are grounded in specific places which opposes a local-global dualism fabricating an all-encompassing and thus superior imaginary of the global. Such translocal practices or "distanciated transactions" (Smart and Lin 2007: 287) are conducted in a particular place but relate to individuals, communities or the like situated in other places. For instance, obligations which migrants feel urged to fulfill, refer to migrants' significant others

back home or in other places, but not to nations. These local-to-local connections therefore challenge the usual understanding of different socio-spatial contexts as ordered in a nested hierarchy headed by a 'global level' as most powerful. Local, translocal and transnational social practices "come together" in particular places at particular times entering into politics of place-making as Smith asserts (2001: 5). This reflects the importance of concrete places as localities where, at particular points in time, practices intersect, manifest themselves and materialize and thereby re-/shape places. Putting such emphasis on place, site and 'the local' marks, indeed, a correspondence with a 'flat ontology' calling to mind the importance of site and concrete places, too (Marston et al. 2005).

Altogether translocality approaches concede an analytical focus in its own right to the production of links between entities, such as individuals, networks or communities, as being embedded in particular places, instead of only traversing interspaces. While links, networks and boundary-crossing practices might hence be treated as mere auxiliaries in making differences in places and scales palpable, they might on the other hand rather be understood as critical in constituting a translocal space. Because a translocale is based on and made of social practices that cross and reshape places and produce linkages between them. It is therefore such interaction which structures translocal social fields. However, this does still allow, and actually necessitates, a notion of power to be taken into account when analyzing such constituting elements of translocales. Practices and meso-structures do reflect power imbalances and thus a gradation of extents of such power, which in turn causes a hierarchical order (in reality). A translocal field might hence be conceptualized as scaleless or not. Power and hierarchies will still play out in interactions of components of translocales. Consequentially, scale would then merely be an auxiliary term in order to decipher and describe links, networks, social practices, embeddedness and interconnectedness. Power and hierarchies will still play out in interactions of components of translocales. Consequentially, scale would then merely be an auxiliary term in order to decipher and describe links, networks, social practices, embeddedness and interconnectedness.

4.   Conclusion

As outlined above, scale is an abstract term characterized by its vagueness, and as a matter of fact, approachable from various points of view. Scale might be referred to as a hierarchy of nested spaces or territories providing a structure or even a world order; it can also be seen as scope or reach of power and (institutional) authorities imagined to be affiliated at different (constructed) levels; in what is considered a geographical sense of scales, the term is related to the extent or size of spaces. Altogether scale serves as an imaginary, a theoretical concept and is ultimately a construct which, for analytical purposes, necessitates deconstruction. Dissecting scale in the context of translocality was therefore this working paper's intention.

Connecting the dots between translocality and scale mainly requires juxtaposing theoretical concepts of translocality and notions of space, as the latter can be considered a configuration in which scales manifest. The signification and implications of different spatial approaches – in particular scales, networks, as well as a 'flat ontology' – for translocality as an analytical framework have been delineated here. For obvious reasons, assuming one single universal spatial concept would not be of great value, but rather tends to be too rigid and coarse to reflect everyday realities to a sensible degree. Among other things that is why scale as a concept has been questioned to quite some extent in recent debates in geography. In that context, flat ontology, defending a radical particularism by emphasizing each site's uniqueness as its decisive constituent, was conceptualized as standing in opposition to scalar thinking. However, a diversity of spatialities has also been acknowledged to legitimately exist, among which flat ontology, as well as scale are two, besides networks, mobilities, connectivity, fluidity, assemblage or mosaics which all qualify as notions of space, too. Furthermore, arguments for combining different spatialities have been made.

At first sight, conceiving of scale as nested hierarchy of spatial entities seems to be contested by translocality or by the emphasis it puts on place and on the local, respectively. It could be shown though that such a stance has its flaws. Translocality is indeed based on the importance of sites, of local-to-local connections, multiple embeddedness, agency and practices. It also takes (transgress-able and re-shapeable) boundaries as well as connectivity and mobility into its focus. Therefore structuring the translocal (social) field requires an integration of a range of components constituting a conceptualization of (translocal) space which also play a role in other spatial approaches, namely understanding space as relational, as made of networked interaction, and nonetheless taking a gradation of spatial figurations into consideration which might resemble scalar thinking. At the same time social practices and sites are to be conceived of as spatial constituents. Because, due to the multi-embeddedness of the former and thus the latter's connectedness, both practices and sites expand localities to locales and translocales; they demand and generate malleability of space and thereby structure (translocal) fields. Such practices do vary in scope and impact on structuring the translocal field though; they emerge and materialize in different contexts. These aspects indicate a differentiation of multiple layers of translocal place-making which might from an analytical point of view benefit from the concept of scale.

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#Concepts

Translocality: Place, Space – and Scale?

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